> executive branches (Naval, Military and Commercial), and as such presented as indents on the Requisitioning Branch. . . . And this indent always exceeded the total in the pool. So each week the heads of these four branches met in an unofficial committee for a final pruning of the total demand. . . . Even while the plan was being framed the submarine would be busy, or a military emergency, or later statistics of food prospects and food requirements, or . . . [etc., etc.] would require a change in allocation.[51]

The difficulties of control and restriction are evident in this picture; but so also is the fact that a system was evolved which during the last two years of the War exercised a real guiding control over the whole field of imports, and carried out a flexible, day-to-day adaptation of its restrictive powers, so as to secure at all times the exclusion of the less vital in favour of the more vital imports. Thereby we won through the acute perils of 1917. Had we continued the haphazard methods of 1916, which offered systematic planning to cover only 1,500,000 to 1,800,000 tons of the reduction of imports which we had to face, it needs little foresight to perceive what disaster would have overtaken us before 1917 was half spent.

3. THE SUPPLY OF HOME-GROWN TIMBER

As the shipping shortage developed and measures had to be devised to economise our available tonnage, the imports of timber were regarded as a commodity specially suitable for restriction, both because timber is very bulky in relation to its value, and because it